

# 2010 Fishing Forecast and 2009 Sampling Results



**NEBRASKA**  
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# 2010 Nebraska Fishing Forecast

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## Walleye

Water levels have started to rebound on many Nebraska irrigation reservoirs in the past couple of years and anglers may look forward to better walleye fishing in years to come. For now, fishing may be tough as expanding walleye populations have larger areas of water to inhabit and much of that new habitat consists of flooded cover full of natural prey.

Unfortunately, not all Nebraska reservoirs will have improved water levels in 2010, as dam safety issues resulted in the lowering of Maloney and Red Willow reservoirs in the late fall of 2009.

In 2010, anglers should look for good numbers of eating-size walleyes at Swanson, Merritt, Sherman, Enders, Johnson, and Sutherland reservoirs. McConaughy again will provide some excellent walleye fishing and likely will be the best water in the state for big walleyes. Lewis and Clark offers some excellent walleye and sauger fishing and do not overlook Oliver and Minatare in western Nebraska. Southeast Nebraska reservoirs tend to have fewer walleyes because the smaller reservoirs are less ideal walleye habitats. However, anglers will have some opportunities to catch walleyes at Yankee Hill, Stagecoach, Wagon Train, and Pawnee.

## White bass

Rising water levels in reservoirs have been good news for white bass, and anglers will begin reaping some of those benefits in 2010. Fish population sampling in the fall of 2009 showed that Swanson and Sherman reservoirs have exceptional numbers of white bass longer than 12 inches. Enders and Jeffrey reservoirs also will offer some good white bass fishing in 2010 and Whitney in the Panhandle would be another one to fish. DeSoto, Davis Creek, Sutherland, and Calamus will have high numbers of white bass, but most of those fish will be less than 12 inches long; fishing on those waters likely will be even better in another year or two.

## Wiper

Wipers also thrive in large reservoir habitats along with white bass and walleyes. Red Willow always has been one of the best wiper fisheries in the state. It also is home of the 20-pound, 1-ounce state record. Red Willow had an excellent population of wipers present in the fall of 2009, and anglers should expect some good fishing there in 2010. However, keep in mind that water levels will be low until dam inspection and repairs are completed.

Nebraska's southwest reservoirs are always some of the best wiper fisheries in the state; Swanson and Enders should be particularly good in 2010.

The reservoirs on the canal system in central Nebraska have some good wiper fishing, and Jeffrey Reservoir should be the best of those. Water levels have been low at Elwood Reservoir for several years, but in spite of that, there is an excellent wiper population present now. Calamus Reservoir would be another body of water for wiper anglers to target. In the southeast, Stagecoach Reservoir would be the best bet for some wipers.

## Bluegill

Many bodies of water can provide clean water and abundant shallow-water cover, especially aquatic vegetation, where bluegills are most successful. In 2010, anglers should find some excellent bluegill fishing at a recently rehabilitated reservoir, Summit, and a recently renovated Interstate 80 lake at the Brady interchange.

Other small reservoirs that should be particularly good for some 8-inch-plus bluegills in 2010 would be Wehrspann, Czechland, and Olive Creek in southeast Nebraska. Other pits to keep in mind for some quality bluegills would be Crystal and Fremont No. 20.

Small lakes at Verdon and Arnold will have some nice bluegills and never overlook Nebraska's Sandhills lakes for big bluegills; Duck and both Smith Lake south of Rushville and Smith Lake on the Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) should be among the best this year.

## Crappie

Crappies thrive in waters that have sheltered areas, bays and coves, and aquatic vegetation or flooded timber. In recent years, water levels have been rising on many Nebraska reservoirs flooding terrestrial vegetation that grew on exposed bottom substrates during drought conditions. Many waters have abundant small crappies that have been produced in the past couple of years and some great crappie fishing is just another year or two away at waters such as Johnson, Harlan and Pawnee.

In 2010, some waters where anglers may find the most crappies larger than 10 inches would be Whitney Reservoir in northwest Nebraska, Stagecoach and Branched Oak reservoirs in the southeast and Davis Creek and Johnson reservoirs in the middle of the state. In the

northeast, Willow Creek Reservoir will offer anglers some good crappie fishing. Do not overlook urban waters such as Zorinsky in Omaha and Melham in Broken Bow.

## Largemouth bass

Largemouth bass are most successful in bodies of water that have clean water and abundant shallow-water cover. In Nebraska, pits, ponds and small reservoirs typically are the best largemouth bass habitats. Anglers may find good numbers of largemouth bass larger than 15 inches at small reservoirs such as Burchard, Grove and Walnut Creek in Papillion; Interstate 80 lakes such as Cheyenne and East Hershey; and small impoundments such as Verdon and Ord City Pond.

Sandpits also may provide excellent largemouth bass fishing. Two Rivers Nos. 1, 2 and 3 would be some of the best spots to catch sandpit bass this year. Nebraska's Sandhills lakes offer anglers some excellent bass fishing where the numbers of fish might not be as high, but anglers may find some of the biggest, fattest and prettiest bass. Watts Lake on the Valentine NWR and Smith Lake south of Rushville would be a couple of the best Sandhills lakes for bass anglers.

## Channel catfish

Channel catfish are popular among Nebraska anglers and may be found across the state. Although a few waters will be mentioned here, that does not mean those are the only waters where anglers can catch catfish. Some of the waters that should be particularly good for catfishing in 2010 would be reservoirs like Branched Oak, Willow Creek, Wagon Train, Czechland, Sutherland, and Harlan. Coot Shallows is an Interstate 80 lake that will offer anglers a number of channel catfish up to 24 inches long this year.

For anglers looking for big channel cats, pay attention to Willard L. Meyer, Harlan, Davis Creek, Box Butte, and Calamus reservoirs. Never forget that many of Nebraska's warm-water streams and rivers also offer excellent catfishing; a trip to the unchannelized portion of the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska would be rewarding for both the scenery and the fishing.

## Other species

With its geographic location in the middle of the country, Nebraska is a mixed bag capital in many ways. A worthy challenge for any

Nebraska angler in 2010 would be to catch as many different species of fish as possible. Besides the fish species highlighted in the statewide fish sampling graphs there are a variety of other species that can be pursued.

Johnson, Lewis and Clark Reservoir and the Missouri River upstream from Lewis and Clark are some of the state's best **smallmouth bass** fisheries. We also have smallmouth bass fisheries developing in Interstate 80 lakes such as War Axe and Fort McPherson.

**Blue catfish** can be found in the Missouri River and in Zorinsky, Wehrspann and Conestoga reservoirs. **Flathead catfish** are among the largest predator fish found in Nebraska waters and anglers can find some trophy flatheads in Harlan, Sherman and Branched Oak reservoirs, as well as the Tri-County and Loup canal systems.

Lewis and Clark and the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska is the best **sauger** fishery in the state, but Johnson Reservoir and the canal system and associated reservoirs above Johnson also have an excellent sauger fishery.

With higher water levels, panfish populations are rebounding in Nebraska's Sandhills lakes. That means better **yellow perch** fishing in 2010, especially at Island Lake on the Crescent Lake NWR, West Long on the Valentine NWR and Frye Lake just north of Hyannis.

Likewise, the Sandhills lakes are consistently some of the best **northern pike** fisheries in the state and once again lakes on the Valentine NWR will be some of the most popular pike fisheries. Do not overlook Box Butte Reservoir in the Panhandle or Goose Lake for northern pike in 2010.

Many anglers' first fish was a **bullhead** and many people continue to appreciate those fish. Bullhead fishing will be particularly good in 2010 at Yankee Hill, Wildwood and Powder Creek reservoirs. Catchable-size bullheads also are stocked at state recreation area lakes Louisville No. 2A, Two Rivers No. 6 (the "carp lake"), Two Rivers No. 7, and Fremont No. 3.

A further example of the great variety of fish species found in Nebraska would be **muskellunge**; anglers may fish for this "king of freshwater fish" at Merritt, Calamus and Wagon Train reservoirs, and Cottonwood-Steverson lakes.

Another great example of that variety would be the cold-water fishing opportunities for **rainbow**, **brown** and **brook trout**, which may be found on streams and rivers, mostly in the western and northern parts of the state, and in Lake Ogallala.

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